

KCT STRATEGIC REVIEW - INTERVIEWS WITH KCT MEMBERS

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN MESSAGES

1. Leadership needs to be strong, visionary, decisive, challenging yet supportive and outcome focused. The Chair needs to be an 'independent' champion for children who is able to encourage collaboration and partnership working. The County Board must set strategy, monitor progress, be prepared to challenge partners and support areas of under-performance within a 'no-blame' approach. The new arrangements must have support from senior leaders in order to be credible and have clear link to the new HW Board and to the Kent Forum i.e. a KCT representative who sits on the Kent Forum to champion the needs of children. Leadership must help partners work collaboratively and identify strategic opportunities for joint approaches - the agenda should be exclusively focused on issues where partnership action is required. The County Board needs to have strong links to the LCTBs - leadership from the KCTB is currently too remote. One suggestion was to rotate KCTB meetings around the Districts.

2. Partners role and responsibilities - more clarity is needed about partners' roles i.e. what each member can bring to the board, what they can influence, what they are responsible for, why they are there. All need to be clear about each others' roles. Members need to be 'movers and shakers' for children i.e. they need to be strong champions for children and in a position of sufficient seniority to challenge decision-making within their own agencies. Whilst members have enjoyed the networking opportunities afforded by the County Board meetings, some would like to see more open and transparent sharing of information, particularly around budgets and resources. Above all KCTB members need evidence of how the Board has made a difference i.e. what has the Board done - this should be evidenced using data to show improvement or not.

3. Governance and accountability - There needs to be better mechanisms for holding partners to account, with a clear set of reporting lines with a defined performance monitoring and management framework. The County Board should be constantly monitoring and challenging latest data on key areas of concern such as LAC, ChIN etc and should have specific collaborative targets (a few jointly agreed outcomes). Headlines should be reported at each meeting which an indication of where we are now. KCT Board members felt there should be a mutually accountable relationship between the KCTB and the KSCB through overlapping membership - which is publicized across the KCTB so that members know who to call to account. It was felt the KSCB needed a scrutiny role. The 12 LCTBs were highly valued but it was felt that funding needed to be devolved down to localities for them to be really effective.

Suggestions for effective partnership working included:

- Service Level Agreements- failure to deliver leading to the relevant organization being called to account.
- Strategic clarity - what is important, what are we doing about it, who is 'doing', what have we done, where are we now?
- Shared training, team building and co-location.
- Focus meetings - theme them and invite relevant partners to the right meetings (not all for everything).
- Communications strategy - vertically and horizontally.
- Short/sharp progress reports/briefings - less is more.
- Sub-groups from KCTB membership with specific areas relating to outcomes.
- Chairs of KCT and KSCB sit on each others' Boards.
- Team building events - low cost.

4. Strategy and Planning - the CYPP is valued as a visionary statement setting out the LCT priorities but needs a clear action plan with a lead partner identified for each action, a clear lead challenger and resources identified. Leads need to be asked to report progress at specific intervals. It was felt that "we never get past the planning stage - we should plan, do, review and celebrate". There should be strong two-way communication with the LCTBs - they should form part of the scrutiny process, with the County Board inviting feedback and ideas from Districts and delivery quick responses. The Board should work more closely with the Commissioning Unit.

5. Joint commissioning and resources - 'Resources' need to be defined and identified (whether people, skills, finance, capital etc). More joint planning is needed to determine what we need to improve in Kent, what resources we have, what needs to be realigned/used differently, what is County, what is local. More understanding is needed around cost effectiveness - i.e. how much do we need to invest to secure outcomes as well as a deeper understanding of the consequences of large scale cuts. It would be useful to have information about savings made from partnership working. In summary KCTB needs to apply resources to meet agreed priorities, against a clear action plan, with measurable outcomes backed by a risk register. At present the Board does not know how resources are spent or what effect spending has had.

6. Performance management - needs strengthening. This should provide scrutiny and challenge which looks at partners' contributions to improving outcomes in the CYPP. Effectiveness should be measured through more intelligent, rigorous use of data, but the KCTB needs to be clear about what it is monitoring, scrutinizing and challenging. Some work needs to be done to look at impact vs cost. The KCTB should prioritise a few big issues for improvement (from the CYPP), take action, then evaluate what difference has been made. Evaluation should be built in at the start using baselines, benchmarks and statistics with a regular reporting cycle to the KCTB.

Evaluation should include more user feedback particularly those users at the 'extreme' ends of the spectrum e.g. disabled or hard to reach groups.

7. Workforce development - The KCTB needs to identify relevant transferable skills that are the minimum requirement for all working within the children's workforce and these need to be widely promoted i.e. start implementing the workforce strategy that was agreed by the Board. There needs to be a shared understanding of early intervention and prevention and integrated processes such as CAF and TAC. These should form part of any induction process for the children's workforce as a whole. It was suggested that the KCTB analyse turnover across the workforce to give a picture of who we are training and retaining within Kent, regardless of agency. Greater use of technology would aid the promotion of workforce development; perhaps a Kent children's workforce website.

8. Communications and connectivity - this area is key and needs to be greatly strengthened with a strong communications strategy to all stakeholders to promote the purpose and work of the KCT, its action plan, results and successes. Clear work plans need to be shared, monitored and linked to other plans. A broader engagement strategy is needed - consultation should focus on the extremes, as well as core groups. More customer feedback should be given i.e. to tell children, young people and their families what we did as a result of what they said. KCTB needs to be aware and make more use of existing mechanisms e.g. youth fora, schools groups, parent groups, special needs groups - all need to be built in to the communications strategy, defining who will be contacted by whom, when, what are the key messages etc. A range of tools could be used including social media. The KCTB newsletter was well regarded as an outward communications tool but could be more 'inclusive'. Communications should not be limited to 'children's specialist services' - but should include the contributions made by non-specialists.

In summary this means:

- Stronger leadership and links to Kent Forum and other key Boards.
- Clearer accountability, rigorous performance management and scrutiny processes.
- Streamlined membership with a clear sense of purpose.
- More openness and transparency.
- Clear processes to enable sharing/pooling of resources to deliver outcomes.
- Improved communications and connections between all stakeholders (regular and targeted).